

# CANTON PARK COMMISSION

## SPECIAL BOARD MINUTES

JUNE 3, 2009

The Canton Board of Park Commissioners met in special session on Wednesday, June 3, 2009, at the Garden Center Building.

Present were: Mr. Andy Black, President; Mr. Lon Winberry, Vice President; Mr. Jack Angelo, Member; and Mr. Douglas V. Perry, Director/Secretary, Mr. Douglas Foltz, Assistant Director and many guests.

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m.

### NEW BUSINESS:

1. Ohio House Bill 195 - President Black stated that the reason for the meeting was the fact that at the request of Mayor Healy, State Representative Stephen Slesnick introduced a bill in Columbus that would allow the legislative authority of a municipal corporation to vote to dissolve its Board of Park Commissioners and adopt an ordinance to transfer the responsibility for the parks to the Director of Public Service.

Mr. Black stated that he had met with Mayor Healy, at the Mayor's request, in the past and that they had talked about the possibility of combining the Park and Recreation Organizations, but was unaware of the Mayor's request to Representative Slesnick. He stated the Mayor's reason for looking into the issue was to try and save operating monies. The Directors had been asked in the past to look into the idea to see if they could see if any money could be saved. He asked the Director to respond.

Director Perry stated that he did not have any files with him as he was on vacation, but Director Sawaya and he had done some work on the issue and did not see where any money could be saved. In addition, there was some concern that the Recreation District could lose their levy. The Director asked Director Sawaya if that was not the case. Director Sawaya stated she thought it was, but she asked Law Director Martuccio to answer the question. Mr. Martuccio stated that if the Recreation Board stayed in its current form, the levy would remain.

Mayor Healy stated that he requested the bill because as the law stands now, there was no way to dissolve a 755 Park Board. He stated it would provide options so the City could see if monies could be saved by combining the two operations. The Mayor said the process to see if the bill would pass takes time. He did not know how long, but stated it could be a month or 1-1/2 years or more before the bill would become law. The Mayor also stated that he did not think anyone would want to pay for a study to see if money could be saved if it was not possible to take the action in the first place.

Mr. Winberry asked why a study was not done first? The Mayor again stated he did not think Council would pay for a study if the action was not possible.

Mayor Healy said that last year Parma put on a safety levy and passed it. He said that a pole could be done to see if people would support a Park and Recreation levy or a Police and Fire levy. The Mayor stated that a Recreation Board could take care of parks, but it would take a new levy of around 3 mils. Again, he was just trying to create options.

Mr. Black said another option would be to just try and get a park levy passed to fund the parks so that the money would not come out of the City's general fund.

Mr. Black asked Mr. Martuccio if the voters could vote to dissolve the Park Board. Mr. Martuccio stated that under common law, it may be possible by an initiative of the voters or maybe by Council putting it on the ballot, but there could be problems with the attempt. He stated another person from his office did the research on the issue.

The Mayor stated that the type of change in the law he was seeking had already been done with regard to township parks.

Councilmember Don Casar asked the Mayor if there were any other issues driving his requested law change? The Mayor responded that there were none. It was all economic driven.

Mr. Casar stated he thought that the Parks & Recreation's staff worked well together and both do very well with the money they have available. He said, "Why fix it if it is not broken," and put on a park levy if one is needed. He also stated that if anyone got rid of the Park Commission, it should be the people and not Council. Mr. Casar said he felt this issue would just create problems when the City had other issues to deal with at this time. He really felt a park levy should be looked at and did not see a reason to seek this change.

Mr. James Lindesmith, President of the Board of the Canton Joint Recreation District, stated that the Recreation levy did not pass by that much the last time. He stated he was unsure that a new 3 mil levy would pass. He felt that it would be better to put on a police levy if any levy were to be put on.

Mayor Healy responded that we need options and this effort creates options. What would people have him do, lay off half of the Park Department?

Councilmember Jim Griffin stated he did not see the system as broken.

The Mayor responded that Parks and Recreation were not broken. It was all about the money.

Mr. Black stated there was no problem in looking at ways to reduce costs, but he felt that should this law pass, it would be like the Sword of Damocles hanging over the Board's head. One decision by the Board that would upset enough Councilmembers, and there would be a problem.



Ms. Nadine Sawaya, Recreation District Director, asked Mr. Martuccio if the Recreation Board would have to dissolve? The Mayor responded that they would not. They would just have to go after an additional levy. He also stated he did not think Council would ever dissolve the Park Commission on a whim.

Councilmember Casar said he just cannot see where any money would be saved when both systems operate on a shoestring now.

The Mayor stated that he thought the Recreation Board only got money from the school district, but not the whole City. A levy covering a larger area would generate more money.

Member Angelo stated that he felt the whole issue was backwards. A study should have been done first. The Board's involved and Council should have been asked to do a study.

Mr. Martuccio stated the State had acted in the past to trump a vote of the people. He said there was a case in the courts now involving residency that could give some guidance.

Ms. Sawaya asked Mr. Martuccio if the Recreation Board would have any say on the issue. The Mayor responded and said they would and indeed they may vote not to combine the systems.

Mr. Casar asked Ms. Sawaya what the Recreation levy generated. She stated it was 1 mil and produced about one million for the District. Mr. Casar stated he thought it would be smart to go after a park levy and keep this issue local and out of the state.

The Mayor stated he thought a new 1 mil levy would bring in about 1.3 million.

Mr. Lindesmith said he thought Mr. Casar's idea was a good idea. Mr. Casar said he would be willing to consider a park levy and asked Mr. Griffin if he would also. Mr. Griffin said he would before going to the state.

The Mayor then stated that a pole should be done to see which kind of levy would be supported. Mr. Casar responded that if we need one for parks then go park, if we need one for police, then go police.

Mr. Black stated he felt the Board should let Representative Slesnick know their feelings with regard to the issue. He also said he had no problem with a vote of the people, but not an action by Council.

Member Angelo made a motion that the Board should oppose the change in the State law introduced by Representative Slesnick. A second was provided by Mr. Black.

The vote was as follows:

- Mr. Black - Yes
- Mr. Winberry - Yes
- Mr. Angelo - Yes

The motion passed.

Councilmember Griffin stated Council would do the same.

Member Angelo asked Mr. Lindesmith if the Recreation Board would consider taking the same action.

Mr. Black asked the Director to begin looking into levy issues, both operating and capital improvements.

Mr. Angelo asked Mr. Martuccio to prepare some notes for the Board as to what options the Board had to oppose the issue.

Mr. Black again stated that he would support a change that would allow voters to take action.

The Mayor stated he had proposed it to Representative Slesnick that way, but since the change in township park law was already done in this way, the state recommended the current language.

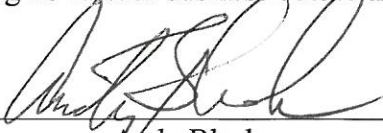

Mr. Angelo also requested the Director to contact the Ohio Parks and Recreation Association to enlist their support to fight the bill.

Mr. Lindesmith stated there were concerns with a park levy attempt in that the Recreation levy was up in two years. The Mayor stated that the City Schools may also have a levy on for the November election.

The Mayor asked if the Boards would look to see if there were any cost savings to the plan. Mr. Black said he would be willing to do so and asked the Director to look at the issue again. Mr. Angelo stated he felt Council should also be involved, maybe a committee. The Mayor suggested that the Service Director and Engineer be involved.

Mr. Lindesmith stated their Board did not meet for two weeks.

Being no further business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 5:10 p.m.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Andy Black  
President  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Douglas Perry  
Director/Secretary